

The memory of the future as a phenomenon of unpredictability in Iuri Lotman

Memória do futuro como fenômeno de imprevisibilidade em Iúri Lotman

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ABSTRACT

This study stems from a partial result of a CNPq-supported research on the concepts and rationales running the memory of the future in culture. Based on Lotman's concepts, it aims to understand the memory of the future as a phenomenon of unpredictability. Its theoretical and methodological approaches included bibliographic research on Lotman's writings and occasionally on other authors in social and human sciences, document searches, and empirical analysis of semiotic translations of the photography by Régis Bossu, *The Kiss*. It aims to show that, as an unpredictable phenomenon, memory is formed from the come-and-go of symbols, reminiscences, and cultural texts that can create future recollections.

Keywords: memory of the future; texts of culture; symbol; Lotman

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RESUMO

Este artigo é resultado parcial de pesquisa desenvolvida no CNPq, em que se investiga a conceituação e as lógicas que operam a memória do futuro na cultura. Com base nas concepções de Iúri Lotman, o artigo objetiva compreender a memória do futuro como fenômeno de imprevisibilidade. A fundamentação teórico-metodológica contempla: pesquisa bibliográfica em escritos do pensador russo e, pontualmente, em outros autores das Ciências Humanas e Sociais; pesquisa documental e análise empírica das traduções semióticas da fotografia produzida por Régis Bossu, *O Beijo*. Espera-se demonstrar que, como fenômeno imprevisível, a memória se faz no ir e vir de símbolos, reminiscências e de textos culturais capazes de criar futuros.

Palavras-chave: Memória do futuro, textos culturais, símbolo, Lotman

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The understanding of memory herein presented is tributary to the thought of cultural historian and semiotician Iuri Mikhailovich Lotman; I understand it as a communicational process and, according to my most recent research, it can also be characterized as memory of the future (Nunes, 2024). This text aims to discuss, based on that Russian author, the conceptualization of memory of the future, the object of my ongoing research at CNPq¹, as a phenomenon of unpredictability by considering the last phase of the cultural theorist's work (1999, 2022).

¹This article is a partial result of research developed with a CNPq productivity grant: PQ 2 (2021-2024), Opinion no. 308261/2020-8. Part of this research was orally presented online as one of the conferences at the Semiotics of Unpredictability. International Seminar to Celebrate Yuri Lotman's Centennial in October 2022 at USP.

The outlined methodological path draws on bibliographic research on Lotman's writings (1981, 1990, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2022) and occasionally from social sciences and humanities authors related to the theoretical field of memory, such as historian Mary Carruthers (2011), philosopher Paul Ricoeur (2007), semioticians Irene Machado (2022) and Jerusa Pires Ferreira (2004), among others. It also includes documentary research and empirical analysis of media and artistic cultural texts, which were chosen considering the stages of the research project presented to CNPq and their production of memories of the future in media cultural texts.

THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF MEMORY IN IURI LOTMAN

A property of the semiosphere and the texts, memory responds by making the windows of the present time into another possibility of existing, an act of the present that turns to the past and the future. In its Portuguese translation, *Ensaio de Semiótica Soviética*, by Iuri Lotman et al. (1981), we read the concept of culture intertwined with that of memory. The text offers the notion of a program dear to the TartuMoscow semioticians. By defining culture as the memory of the collectivity, those authors explore “the problem of the system of semiotic rules according to which the life experience of humanity is converted into culture: rules that, in turn, can be treated precisely as a program” (Lotman et al., 1981, p. 41, free translation). Memory is also understood as a program that has some specificities.

The thinkers point to the functional difference between the culture that looks at the past from the point of view of behavior performance, that is, as a program, and the program itself “that looks to the future from the point of view of those who elaborate it” (Lotman et al., 1981, p. 41). They state that a text can be one thing or another depending on the function it fulfills in a given collectivity in its historical life.

Lotman and Uspenskii also offer some of their assumptions for understanding memory in culture as a communicational mechanism: recognizing the importance

of the longevity of the texts and codes of collective memory. It is worth explaining the term “workings,” as Irene Machado does in the preface to the Brazilian edition of the *Unpredictable workings of culture* (2022), that is: “working as a definer of the work of semiosis as a formative expansion of the space of culture” (Machado, 2022, p. 26, free translation). Longevity is a central problem regarding culture and its ability to organize and conserve information. The relation between texts and their codes (which fails to necessarily have to directly correspond to each other) highlights the longevity linked to stability – but also, I suggest, to unpredictability.

The longevity of texts, according to the authors, creates a hierarchy of values within cultures to make the texts with the longest longevity more valid. On the other hand, the longevity of the code is determined by its constancy and internal dynamism, the latter of which guarantees “its capacity to change while preserving the memory of previous states and, therefore, the self-consciousness of unity” (Lotman et al., 1981, p. 43, free translation). This disturbing formulation makes one think that memory can also configure a phenomenon of unpredictability since texts and codes, needed for its materialization, generally require both the stability of permanence and the transformation of unpredictable effects.

Culture becomes synonymous with the long-lived memory of the collectivity, counting on the increase in the volume of texts and on their redistribution, promoting the reorganization of the coding system and generating movement. Thus, the increase in the volume of memory occurs at the expense of a reserve of texts that was inactive in the centrality of the semiosphere, but which may become current. In Lotman and Uspenskii, memory also uses its dialectical pair, oblivion, as a way of gaining content. Thus, the transformation of a chain of facts into text is always accompanied by a selective process, resulting in the idea that every text contributes to memory and to oblivion and that the history of the destruction of cultural texts of memory moves parallel to the history of the creation of new texts, to paraphrase the authors.

We can attest to the dynamism of these conceptualizations by observing the operations of memory in media and artistic cultural texts in the semiospheres in moments of explosion and gradualness, concepts dear to the last phase of the work of the thinker from Tartu, which are explained in the next section.

THE UNPREDICTABLE OF A KISS

On the 30th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in October 1979, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev met Erich Honecker, Chairman of the State Council and General

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Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party in the GDR, at the Niederschönhausen Castle in Pankow, East Berlin (“Der Bruderkuß”, 2019). Several journalists covered the event, including Régis Bossu, a French photographer who reported German news for the photo agency Sygma.

In his memoirs, partially narrated on the blog *Boulevard Extérieur*, Bossu comments that, at that night, “there were speeches, exchanges of medals, and kisses in the Russian way to congratulate each other”² (Bossu, 2009, free translation). The exchange of three kisses on the cheek combined with a hug was known as a socialist fraternal kiss or socialist fraternal hug and meant a greeting between communist leaders manifesting the bond between the countries of the bloc. “In rare cases, when the two leaders considered themselves exceptionally close, the kisses were given on the mouth rather than on the cheeks.” (“Socialist Fraternal,” 2014, free translation). Brezhnev, in turn, was known for kissing the mouth of politicians and/or various personalities, not only communists (Timofeitchev, 2019).

Bossu reports that, despite being positioned in a very bad place (behind the heads of his many colleagues) and being unable to use a wide-angle camera, he zoomed in on the leaders’ faces at the moment of the kiss (Witter, 2015). Sygma sold the image to the French newspaper *Paris-Match*, known for covering current affairs and for his shock-photos, publishing it on a double-page page with the title *The Kiss* (Figure 1) in allusion to Robert Doisneau’s 1950 photograph *The Kiss by the Hôtel de Ville*.

Figure 1
Meeting of Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker on the 30th anniversary of the GDR in 1979, East Berlin



Note. Brain Journal, 2018.

Bossu “was the only one to take a photograph from this angle, with a Nikon 80-200 mm lens” (Costa, 2022, para. 1, free translation). In the words of the photographer: “it was the first time that two political leaders from the Eastern bloc were so intimately and clearly exposed to the rest of the world in such a ridiculous way”² (Bossu, 2009, free translation). Despite its unusual and precise angle, it is worth noting that the kiss constitutes a symbol that was part of a diplomatic ritual in that semiosphere.

The approximation of the faces and lips obtained by zooming, the caption that accompanied the image, the contrast created by the loving instant of the kiss between authoritarian leaders, and its circulation in the *Paris-Match* characterize this image as shock-photos. As such, it is manifested in its “in all its stubbornness, its literality, in the very obviousness of its obtuse nature,” thinking with Roland Barthes (1982, p. 69, free translation). That is: that kiss frees itself from the diplomatic-political plot to become a kiss between Brezhnev and Honecker. With the help of these connotative procedures, the idea of “men’s excitement for the kiss” is constructed, “the torrid kiss of the cold war,” the title of the article about the photo displayed on the French website *L’obs* (Witter, 2015, free translation), among others, and provokes shock and emotion.

This image also shows the kiss as a symbol, as Lotman (1990, p. 101) presents:

... We have seen how the symbol serves as a condensed programme for the creative process: The subsequent development of a plot is merely the unfolding of a symbol’s hidden possibilities. A symbol is a profound coding mechanism, a special kind of ‘textual gene’. But the fact that one and the same primary symbol can be developed into different plots, and the actual process of this development is irreversible and unpredictable, proves that the creative process is asymmetrical. Using Prigogine’s terminology we can define the moment of creative inspiration as a situation of extreme far-from equilibrium which precludes any simple predictable development.

Lotman’s quote seems to indicate the key to understanding what happened to Bossu’s image. Rather than an artistic photo, it was initially intended as a referential image, a photography for the press. However, randomness acted at the moment the image was shot: the unfavorable place the photographer occupied among journalists, the lack of another lens, the use of zoom at the moment of the kiss, etc. A creative process established itself, the consequences of which would be unpredictable on that occasion that celebrated the 30th anniversary of East Germany in the middle of the Cold War. Looking from the present to the past, I think, rather than of a chain of concluded explanatory events, of the explosive processes Lotman theorized since “the moment of explosion breaks

²In the original: “C’était la première fois que deux leaders politique du bloc de l’Est étaient si intimement et clairement exposés au reste du monde de façon grotesque”.

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the chain of cause and effect, causing an entire area to rise up and a collection of identically probable events to come into view” (Lotman, 2022, pp. 93-94, free translation). The construction of that image, as plot and as a text, it was a possible result, the result of the explosive moment of the creation of the image.

The fall of the Berlin Wall 10 years later, a culturally explosive moment, again values photographic cultural text, reactivated in the semiosphere. I stress the importance of images having a high emotional content to remain either in human memory thanks to the neurochemical and psychic processes that consolidate our memories or in culture as memory, considering the importance of emotional images since the first rhetoric in the West, a theme I have developed in many works since the publication of my PhD thesis (Nunes, 2001).

Shortly before the reunification of the two Germanies, a process celebrated on October 3, 1990, Russian artist Dmitri Wrubel, then 26 years old, painted in one of the remaining parts of the wall transformed into an open-air gallery, the East Side Gallery³, the work that would be known to the general public as *The Fraternal Kiss* (Figure 2), the inspiration to which is the photographic image recorded by Bossu, seen by Wrubel at some point in his youth (Bossu, 2009; Witter, 2015; Costa, 2022). The work would become a memorable text, representing the end of the Iron Curtain, and was absorbed by media culture (“A verdadeira história,” 2014).

³ From December 1989, two German artists' associations, the Federal Association of Visual Artists and the Association of Visual Artists of the GDR began negotiating the wall painting project by artists from all over the world, as a first all-German art project: 118 artists from 21 countries painted 106 large-scale paintings on the wall on the East Berlin side. The East Side Gallery was founded by official order of the Council of Ministers of East Germany (Clemens, 2009).

Figure 2

My God, help me to survive this deadly love



Nota. “A verdadeira história,” 2014.

According to a documentary produced by Euronews (“A verdadeira história,” 2014), in which Wrubel participates, he would have painted the graffiti in seven days and ceded his rights to the East Side Gallery. I learned from the newspapers they had named the painting according to interpretations linked to the political

context, despite an inscription on it *My God, help me to survive this deadly love*, the original title the artist gave it. In an interview, he explains his intention:

The phrase had to do with a personal experience with my relationship with two women. It is a work dedicated to love, in the image of love. We can all experience different situations in our daily lives in which we feel trapped by the lips of this type of monster. At that time, it was a tribute to my personal difficulties! (“A verdadeira história,” 2014, free translation)

The graffiti inspired by photography summons a more radical irony and resignification due to its contact with other contexts and cultural texts in a new semiotic formation. Metonymic cuts operate the translation and the selection of signs in the creation of the new text since the photojournalistic cultural text was transmuted into an artistic cultural text. If in photography the kiss as photo-shock freed itself from that symbolic context to emerge as an instant, displacing the fraternity codified in ritualized customs among communist politicians, in graffiti the displacement is even greater: the fusional kiss expands in colors, gains tactility by the enhancement attributed to the skin of the aged faces in the grooves of the wall; and discards the whole old scene: the austerity of black and white, the bodies in ties, lined up and ordered, which are subtly in the background of the shot, the formal applause, the rite.

The combination of titles, the one given by the Gallery, *Fraternal Kiss*, and the one inscribed in the work, *God, help me survive this deadly love*, adds a field of paradoxical significance to the kiss: asking God for help to survive deadly love can refer to the request for deliverance from death imposed on so many Germans in innumerable attempts to escape from the eastern zone under the domination of the communist fraternity, portraying the cordiality between the leaders and the mortification of the population, but it can also speak to the traps or monsters of love as the artist wants, metaphorizing the erotic love of their personal experiences. In both situations, love can become love-death. Hence, perhaps, the name “kiss of death,” which also appears as equivalent to “fraternal kiss” in some documentary research carried out.

Graffitied, the features of the eyebrows and glasses make us recognize Brezhnev and Honecker; The kiss – fruit and symbol of love-death – can feed back into the authoritarian sense of the old regime. However, the displacement caused by these intersemiotic translations helps the web of another new plot, now with a parodic effect, caused in equal measure by the strong sense of freedom thanks to the fall of the wall that separated the same municipality into two completely different worlds for 28 years.

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Lotman (2022, p. 97) states that “explosive processes represent the actualization of one out of a series of equally probable possibilities from the bundle. This moment of actualization is also the moment at which indeterminacy is exhausted. At such a moment, all possibilities are equally plausible, and it is fundamentally impossible to predict their consequence” (free translation). If Bossu were somewhere else in the audience, with another camera, he certainly would not have produced the image that matched the standards of the *Paris-Match* and, in this way, that it would not circulate to such an extent to find the Russian artist in some part of Europe in his youth, remaining as an impactful memory to, 10 years later, graffiti it on the remaining part of the wall.

Other images of the same event were produced, such as that of German photographer Barbara Klemm, published in the newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Figure 3). The journalist preferred not to use a close-up and photograph the political entourage, emphasizing the rigidity of that ritual. Although a significant image that increases the volume of the memory of the kiss among communist leaders in Western culture, it did not have the same consequence as that by Bossu.

Figure 3

Meeting of Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker on the 30th anniversary of the GDR in 1979, East Berlin Image by Barbara Klemm



Note. “Der Bruderkuss,” 2019.

Documentary research on *The Fraternal Kiss* show that the work suffered numerous damages (Figure 4) and, on the commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the wall, it was repainted at the request of the East Side Gallery and the German government.

Figure 4

Deteriorated image of the Fraternal Kiss, Berlin



Note. "A verdadeira história", 2014.

All the artists invited in 1989 were again called and paid to redo their works with more durable paints in 2009 (Clemens, 2009), which, to some extent, reinvigorated Wrubel's painting, the Gallery itself, and its tourist appeal. On this occasion, Wrubel and Bossu met. In his memoirs, the photographer narrates: "for twenty years, I could see that the success of the mural only grew, but very few people knew the original from a press photo" (Bossu, 2009, free translation). With the meeting between the two, at least for a certain time, photograph and the photographer could be (re)known by a greater number of people (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Meeting of Régis Bossu and Dmitri Wrubel, in Berlin, 2009



Note. Lebie, 2009.

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It is important to emphasize, based on Lotman's studies – and I especially quote his *Universe of the mind* (1990, p. 104), the duality of symbols. Considering recurrence through cultural history, “a symbol shows its invariancy and its repeatability . . . On the other hand, a symbol actively correlates with its cultural context, transforms it, and is transformed by it. Its invariance is realized in the variations.” We witnessed the transformation of the meaning of the fraternal kiss as a symbol of communist ritual when photographed and, 10 years later, as graffiti. In its new textuality, the kiss, with each explosive movement for its creation, moves a little more.

KISSING AS A SYMBOL IN THE SYNCHRONIC CUTS OF CULTURES

As said, for Lotman, the symbol is a “profound coding mechanism” (1990, p. 101), a special type of textual gene. Thus, the kiss symbol undergoes other semioticizations, such as those provoked by the languages of consumption consolidated in the Western world in which reunified Germany is inserted in a way never foreseen in the cultural context of the cold war in which it was produced as a photo-shock. The image of the graffiti kiss is objectified in *souvenirs* for tourist consumption: T-shirts, books, fridge magnets, etc., sold profusely as signs of contemporary Berlin (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Souvenirs for consumption at the Wall Museum, Berlin



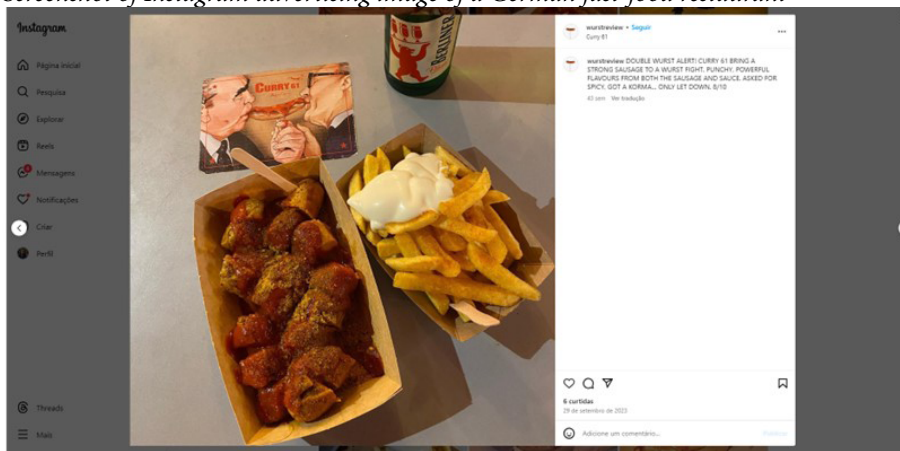
Note. Elaborated by the author.

Souvenirs are added to advertising texts. The advertising and decoration of a local restaurant, constituting new plots, new texts, harbor the graffiti kiss in its condition as a textual encoding gene, provoking the “interpretive recoding.”

according to the expression by Irene Machado (2022). The sense here is the mocking and phallic tone thanks to the sausage seasoned with curried ketchup, characteristic of the *currywurst*, a German fast-food dish, placed between lips that no longer kiss (Figure 7). Just as the hands that in journalistic photography cordially touch bodies in the form of a hug, in advertising they meet to share a toothpick while sustaining the food, connoting affective closeness (Figure 8).

Figure 7

Screenshot of Instagram advertising image of a German fast-food restaurant



Note. Wurstreview, 2023.

Figure 8

Interior of a German Fast-Food Restaurant in Berlin, 2022



Note. Curry61berlin, 2022.

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The record of Brezhnev's kiss on Honecker produced by Régis Bossu in 1979, coded as a shocks-photo, proves to be a long-lived and stable text in the semiosphere when it inspired Wrubel a decade later. I understand that even under the logic of consumption and merchandise that encompass such images, recoding processes establish, in the longevity and stability of the text, the unpredictability provided by the change in the semantic valence of the symbol, which imprints the change of the code.

Let us look at another series of images over the years that separate us from the fall of the wall. According to Witter (2015) and Costa (2022), the Benetton brand used the reference to the image of the kiss to carry out its 2011 advertising campaign with the "Unhate" preaching against hate speech. There, antagonistic politicians and religious people reconfigure peace thanks to the kiss (Figure 9), that is, with a different meaning from journalistic photography and Wrubel's graffiti. In both, politicians live in mortal fraternity, connoting ambiguity to the kiss, simultaneously loving and cruel. In the Benetton image, the kiss disambiguates, appeases the leaders; it does not kill, it vivifies.

Figure 9
Benetton brand campaign, 2011



Note. "Kiss Day," 2014

The understanding of memory as a property of cultural texts helps us to understand it as a living a plastic phenomenon, rather than a fixed one. In this case, the iconic memory (Ferreira, 2004) of the bodies that kiss supervenes on the historical episode photographed by Bossu, probably already forgotten or unknown to the more recent generations that consume the graffiti image, stamped on the T-shirt, printed on the fridge magnet, on the wall of the restaurant. The images of Benetton or the covers published by the Brazilian magazine *Piauí* in the second half of the 2000s no longer mention the communist leaders in the original photo and in the graffiti at the East Side Gallery.

According to the September 2022 article, whose edition honors the Russian artist who died in August of that year, victim of complications from COVID-19, “*Piauí* was inspired by the image of Wrubel⁴ on four covers throughout his sixteen years of life” (Costa, 2022, para. 7, free translation) (Figure 10). All images were created by Russian artist Nadia Khuzina.

⁴Throughout the conducted documentary research, the spelling of the surname of the Russian artist features a “w.” However, the *Piauí* magazine spelled it with a “v,” so it was kept in the citation.

Figure 10

Covers of *Piauí* magazine inspired by the Fraternal Kiss



Note. FutPapers, 2020.

From a semiotic point of view, the covers to the great close-up of the *Fraternal Kiss* and to the angulation of the embraced bodies in an American shot closer to the press photograph by Barbara Klemm of the Soviet ceremony or to so many others that involve the socialist kisses portrayed since then (Timofeitchev, 2019) and that circulate as texts in the semiosphere.

As Wrubel’s graffiti, the parodic criticism occurs in the image. However, they are not just leaders of the Eastern bloc. On the left, the cover featuring Edward Snowden and Vladimir Putin refers to Snowden’s asylum application after revealing secret documents in 2013 that proved the U.S. National Security

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Agency was spying on high-level politicians from several northern partner countries and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff (“Exilado na Rússia”, 2022). In the center, Michel Temer and Eduardo Cunha on the impeachment President Dilma; on the right, Bolsonaro and Olavo de Carvalho, in the month in which the disagreements between the Brazilian military member and the flat-earthier are reported. The kiss is fraternal between them, but its complicity is parodied because something is to be achieved behind its back – a request, in the Snowden-Putin case: freedom for Pussy Riot, a Russian punk rock group who became known for performing shows and events of political demonstration in favor of women’s rights and against government policies (the all-female group was imprisoned at the time); in Temer-Cunha, the negotiation for Dilma’s impeachment; a scorching object, such as the fraternity between Bolsonaro and Carvalho, which generated the conflict between the then president of the Republic and the member of the military.

Lotman (1990, p. 104) points out that:

What is important is that the semantic potentials of a symbol are always greater than any realization of them: the links which, with the help of its expression, a symbol establishes with a particular semiotic context, never exhaust all its semantic valency.

This is what is revealed by the creation of the media and/or artistic cultural texts that are the photographic image produced by Bossu and the graffiti painted by Wrubel submerged in the semiosphere, in continuum and, in this way, acting as generators of meanings.

As texts, they are reduced mnemotechnical programs, that is, they can “restore memory.” Lotman’s (1996, p. 89) famous statement that “texts are as the seeds of plants, capable of conserving and reproducing the memory of previous structures” helps to understand the consequences of these images that continue in action, generating others, in multiple materialities and cultural contexts, with meanings that are often different from the originals. It is worth noting that the generative capacity of texts imprints the idea that they are not passive carriers of meaning, they are dynamic and internally contradictory. Being a textual generator requires operating in a context in interaction with other texts and the semiotic medium. As Lotman (1996) points out, texts become integral symbols, acquire autonomy from their context, and can function not only in the synchronic cut of culture, but also diachronically as a symbol. “In this case, the separate symbol acts as an isolated text that moves

freely in the chronological field of culture and that increasingly correlates in a complex way with its synchronic cuts” (Lotman, 1996, p. 89).

Kissing as a symbol, depending on the synchronic cut of culture, can unsurprisingly find new actors. Donald Trump, then still a candidate for the US elections, appears kissing Vladimir Putin in Lithuania. The graphic artist Mindaugas Bonanu recreated Wrubel’s *Fraternal Kiss* on the outer walls of a café in Vilnius (Figure 11). Dressed in clothes that refer to those of the Adidas brand, the graffiti includes a series of pieces whose title is the paraphrastic form of one of Trump’s well-known phrases: make America great again. The Lithuanian graffiti reads *Make everything great again*, in any case, discarding the original title of the Russian artist. The co-owner of the establishment, Dominykas Ceckauskas, said in an interview with the agency *Baltic News Service* that “They both have an ego that is too big, and it is funny that they get along well.” (“Grafiti na Lituânia,” 2016, free translation).

Figure 11

Make everything great again, Bonanu graffiti, in Vilnius, Lithuania



Note. “Grafiti na Lituânia”, 2016

According to documentary research (“Vilnius: A quirky,” 2020), from 2016 onwards, with Trump’s victory, that image was erased and replaced by another in which Trump blows at a very sick-looking Putin (Figure 12). Irony is mixed with the languages of consumption that semiotize graffiti, and kissing is transferred to pieces of clothing (Figure 13) in a continuous and gradual movement.

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Figure 12

Make everything great again, Bonanu graffiti, in Vilnius, Lithuania



Note. "Vilnius: A quirky", 2020

Figure 13

*Colorful socks from the
Make everything great again
collection⁵*

⁵ See <https://moustache.lt/product/spalvotos-kojines-make-everything-great-again-socks/>



Note. The Ammolite Gallery, 2024.

In 2018, in a municipality in Ceará, Maracanaú, Trump appears once again, now kissing Bolsonaro under the paints of artist Yuri Sousa, whose signature is “Black bad boy” (Figure 14). The creator’s purpose, according to his words, is to put politicians in the position of those they criticize, “in this case, homosexuals” (Carvalho, 2018). The graffiti was erased in less than 48 hours, according to the author, “probably by some Bolsonaro supporter.” In this graffiti, the kiss as a symbol takes on the meaning of a gay kiss – target of homophobia by the represented politicians and, therefore, reason for conservative anger whose reaction is the erasure of the image.

Figure 14

Trump and Bolsonaro’s kiss



Note⁶.

⁶ See <https://br.noticias.yahoo.com/grafite-de-beijo-entre-trump-e-bolsonaro-e-apagado-no-ceara-205707654.html>

MEMORIES OF THE FUTURE – FINAL REMARKS

This series of images shows the reorganization of the coding system, the movement of the texts, and the provoked meanings. Paraphrasing Lotman (1990, p. 18), it is worth saying that the text is not something given, immutable. Inside it, incomplete structures provide a reserve of dynamism when influenced by contacts with new contexts.

Then, what do these texts say about the construction of the memory of the future as a phenomenon of unpredictability? Especially in artistic texts, an internally varied, heterogeneous, panchronic, and dynamic memory speaks to many temporalities, including the future.

The notion of text as a mechanism that generates meanings offers clues to understand the configuration of time in Lotman. As mentioned, the semiotician

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considers the text as condensing cultural memory, capable of preserving previous contexts, that is, its past. However, we can also recognize a projective temporality that points to the future and enables the birth of texts from texts (Lotman, 1996) as in the examples in this study, among many others

The metaphor helps us to recognize the panchrony implied in the concept, in which the texts is “like a grain of wheat which contains within itself the programme of its future development.” (Lotman, 1990, p. 18). We find that time and memory, the condensation of the past and the projection into the future, intertwine with each other. This generative capacity of texts also stresses a memory-genesis in culture necessary to produce them, because, as he states, “memory is not for the culture a passive depository, but part of its mechanism of textual creation” (Lotman, 1996, p. 161, free translation).

The projective memory-genesis I see in Lotman’s semiotics helps deeming it as a processual and generative element, not only as a “memory of the past,” as per Paul Ricoeur (2007) explaining the conceptualization of memory in Aristotle as a mark of the thing remembered but also as a memory of the future. Future, not necessarily as what is placed ahead, but in its web and in what is contained in roads untraveled, as Lotman (1998) teaches us in his *Clio at the crossroads: the future in what could be remembered*.

In other words, the future of all texts the symbols and reminiscences of which feature in projectiles guessed in their hidden possibilities, in the multiplicities of plots to come. From this perspective, I intuit that the semantic reserve “thanks to which a symbol can enter into unexpected relationships, altering its essence and deforming its textual context in unpredictable ways,” as Lotman (1990, p. 104) writes, integrates the creative and mnemonic imagination necessary for the memory of the future.

The memory of the future, among other definitions beyond the scope of this study, is this generative projective movement that can acquire, in turn, the order of the unknown, the unpredictable. Why is the projective mechanism not just expectation? Why can we talk about projective memory? I then bring the research I carry out on memory of the future based on Lotman closer to that of historian Mary Carruthers (2011), as in previous studies (Nunes & Bin, 2018; 2021).

Mary Carruthers (2011) deems the art of memory or mnemotechnics as a memory of the future in her research on classical and medieval rhetoric. The author states that medieval memory operates as a *machina memorialis* and as a mill, grinding the grains of past experience into flour to make new bread. The

art of monastic memory was considered an art of thought and cogitation and would not necessarily be concerned with being faithful to reality.

Thus, it acts as a matrix of a reminiscent cogitation, that is, it mixes what has been stored in a set of random-access memory schemes (referring to the use of tropes and figures) toward its inventive use. Carruthers points out that the rhetorical mnemonic technique was understood as a compositional art bordering on what is now called imagination, creativity, or even visionary experiences.

For Carruthers, to remember is to generate a mental vision from the materials of memory. The author uses Augustine's trope of "the memory of heaven" to draw attention to the fact that, although impossible of being known before death, it was real. She attests that "*memoria*, the means by which humans comprehend time, enables us to recall past things, embrace present things, and contemplate future things through their likeness to past things" (Carruthers, 2011, p. 112, free translation). She understands the process of cognition in a compositional, reminiscent way that consists of recalling acts, mnemonic operations, and captures of other memories.

As a communicative and sociocultural process, "memory can make use of models, theories, or uses that presuppose the creation and invention in the present of a composition directed to the future" (Nunes & Bin, 2018, p. 21, free translation). In a semiotic *continuum* and in explosions, "texts and codes remain, modify, coexist, interact, bump into each other, and the shock germinates novelty, the new text bearing marks of the old, the textual genes, apt to inscribe unpredictability in the nascent memory" (Nunes & Bin, 2018, p. 21, free translation). The memory-genesis I see in Lotman's (1990) concept can be understood under the sign of inventive, projective memory, less used to what happened, and more as memory that recalls the future.

One last image helps to close this study, remaining far from concluding it. Considering the management of the COVID-19 pandemic as a metonym of the Brazilian government in the period from 2018 to 2022, the *Piauí* magazine created another text on its cover in May 2020, the coding gene of which was also the kiss inspired by Wrubel's graffiti, according to the magazine itself (Costa, 2022). Instead of Brezhnev, Honecker, and other public personalities, as in the presented images, iconically recalled by the presence of two actors, only one reminiscent politician is feature, the other being replaced by death, carrying his scythe in his skeletal hands that brings the bodies closer together, inviting them to an incomplete kiss, a promise of a necrophiliac jouissance (Figure 15).

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Figure 15

Cover of the *Piauí* magazine, May 2020



Note. Revista *Piauí*, 2020

Lotman (1990, p. 105) remarks that a symbol exists before any text and independently of it. It emerges in the memory of an artist (writer) from the depths of cultural memory and comes to life in a new text like a grain on fresh ground. In turn, a reminiscence, a reference, a quotation are organic parts of the new text, functioning only in its synchrony. They pass from the text to the depths of memory while a symbol passes from the depths of memory to the text.

With the textual creations based on the images of the Kiss produced by Régis Bossu and Dmitri Wrubel, we witness – by layers of explosions and gradualities considering the continuity of the kiss as a symbol in its semantic plurality – a coming and going of symbols and reminiscences that never return to the produced textualities or to individual memories in the same way, always preserving a degree of unpredictability. The memory of the future or memory-genesis consists of symbols, reminiscences, and the reserve of imagination of moving texts that can propagate futures such as the cover of *Piauí*, in which we will remember the future in the fulfillment of the promise of a kiss. ■

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